

Dr. Jonathan V. Wright's

# NUTRITION & HEALING

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## From kidney stones to canker sores, natural ways to treat your nagging health problems

By Jonathan V. Wright, M.D.

### **Stones should be in riverbeds—not in your kidneys! Keep kidney stones at bay with natural therapies**

*Q: I recently passed a kidney stone—it was the most excruciating pain I've ever experienced. I've heard that once you have kidney stones, you're more likely to get them again. I don't ever want to go through what I just dealt with again. Is there any way to stop them from recurring?*

---E.H., Wilcox, PA

**A:** Even though kidney stones are one of the most common urinary tract disorders, they are nothing short of agonizing for those who suffer from them.

Fortunately, there's a lot you can do to keep your kidneys free from stones for good. To understand the best way to fight them, there are a few basic facts you need to know about kidney stones. First, two-thirds of all cases involve calcium oxalate stones. Traditional medicine tries to prevent these by calling for dietary calcium restrictions and sometimes diuretics. But we know that nutritional treatment is just as effective in considerably reducing, or even eliminating, calcium oxalate stone formation. Following the course of action I'm going to outline for you below will involve adding

some supplements and introducing some changes to your diet, but it's also very likely to make prescription drugs unnecessary.

Many of my patients have been surprised when I've explained to them that restricting their calcium intake is not helpful in preventing

*"I've heard that once you have kidney stones, you're more likely to get them again...Is there any way to stop them from recurring?"*

calcium oxalate kidney stones. And it could even make the problem worse.

But there are other nutrients you need to add—and to limit. Vitamin A (not betacarotene) promotes healthy functioning of the urinary tract, so people who are deficient in it sometimes form kidney stones more easily than others. You'll find vitamin A in most good general multiple vitamin and mineral supplements (which I advise you and everyone to take even when you supplement with individual nutrients).

Magnesium helps the body

dissolve calcium so if you're deficient in this mineral it can cause calcium to accumulate into deposits, which increases your risk of forming kidney stones. Decades ago, Harvard researchers found that taking magnesium along with vitamin B<sub>6</sub> can reduce calcium oxalate stone formation dramatically.

You won't normally hear me touting a meat-free diet. But vegetarians actually tend to form significantly fewer calcium oxalate kidney stones than meat eaters. There are a couple of obvious reasons. Vegetarian diets include more bulk and fiber, which lowers calcium output. And, vegetable protein contains fewer sulfur-rich amino acids than animal protein, and those amino acids promote calcium excretions. I'm not saying you should give up meat entirely, but it will help you to increase fiber sources in your diet, such as root vegetables, and to cut back on how much meat you eat.

Sugar and salt can also increase the excretion of both calcium and oxalate in the urine, so since you have a tendency to form kidney stones, you should definitely limit, if not completely eliminate, sugar and refined carbohydrates from your diet, and cut back a bit on salt.



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**Our mission:**

*Nutrition & Healing* is dedicated to helping you keep yourself and your family healthy by the safest and most effective means possible. Every month, you'll get information about diet, vitamins, minerals, herbs, natural hormones, natural energies, and other substances and techniques to prevent and heal illness, while prolonging your healthy life span.

A graduate of Harvard University and the University of Michigan Medical School (1969), Dr. Jonathan V. Wright has been practicing natural and nutritional medicine at the Tahoma Clinic in Kent, Washington, since 1973. Based on enormous volumes of library and clinical research, along with tens of thousands of clinical consultations, he is exceptionally well-qualified to bring you a unique blending of the most up-to-date information and the best and still most effective natural therapies developed by preceding generations.

*Nutrition & Healing* cannot improve on these famous words:

*"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."*

The inalienable right to life must include the right to care for one's own life. The inalienable right to liberty must include the right to choose whatever means we wish to care for ourselves. In addition to publishing the best of information about natural health care, *Nutrition & Healing* urges its readers to remember their inalienable rights to life, liberty, and freedom of choice in health care. This information is published to help in the effort to exercise these inalienable rights, and to warn of ever-present attempts of both government and private organizations to restrict them.

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But calcium oxalate isn't the only type of kidney stone. The less common type are uric acid kidney stones. As with the calcium oxalate, cutting back your intake of animal protein while increasing bulk and fiber in your diet can help prevent them from forming.

And, in addition to the problem refined sugar can pose for you, we know that fructose can also increase uric acid excretion in the urine. Eating whole fruit doesn't cause this problem, but drinking fruit juice or drinks sweetened with "high fructose corn syrup" does.

Your basic kidney-stone prevention program should include limiting your intake of meat, sugar, salt, and fruit juice, increasing dietary fiber, and supplementing with 10,000 units of vitamin A, 300 milligrams of magnesium citrate, and 100 milligrams of vitamin B<sub>6</sub> each day. Even though studies have "dispelled the myth" that higher amounts of vitamin C promote calcium oxalate kidney stone formation, I've seen two such cases first hand. So if you take three or more grams of vitamin C each day, have your doctor measure your urinary oxalate.

As you said in your question, you don't ever want to go through this pain again. So while some of these dietary restrictions may seem overwhelming, they should make a huge difference and could even stave off future stones completely. **JWW**

## The "sugar destroyer" herb safely curbs kiddies' sweet toothes

**Q:** *In a recent newsletter, you talked of controlling diabetes the herb gymnema. Can this be used with children and if so what dosage for what ages?*

*Thank you! I really enjoy your newsletter*

---B.D., via e-mail

**A:** We featured gymnema in the "Botanical of the Month" column in the January 2002 issue. While I read just about everything I can get my hands on to stay on top of nutritional therapies, no one knows herbs better than the author of the original article, my friend and colleague, Kerry Bone. So, I passed your question on to him. Here's what Kerry had to say:

Gymnema is a well-proven treatment for diabetes, and for over 2,000 years, it's been used for just that. Gymnema also has a small following as an herbal "party trick." Let me explain: When you put it in your mouth, taste buds don't detect sweet flavors. It literally blocks sweet tastes. So within minutes, eating a cookie tastes like eating a wad of salt and flour—not very appetizing, I know.

Gymnema works rapidly to remove the taste of the sugar, but it can also work quickly to control blood sugar levels. Used on its own, it won't drop your blood sugar levels enough to cause hypoglycemia. But, it is important to point out that there is the risk that this could happen if it's used *with* insulin or anti-diabetic drugs. So in these cases, gymnema should only be taken under professional supervision.

Working with my patients, I've found that gymnema *is* suitable for

use in children, and is particularly valuable in delaying the onset of Type 1 diabetes (where there is sufficient warning of its development). Children should be given a fraction of the adult dose. To figure out how much to give, divide the child's weight in pounds by the number 130. That's the fraction of the adult dose you should use. For example, if the child weighs 65 lbs. then he would receive half the adult dose. Incidentally, gymnema works best when taken about 10 to 15 minutes before meals.

You should be able to find gymnema at your local health food store. Dr. Wright also makes sure it's offered it through the Tahoma Clinic Dispensary. --**Kerry Bone**

## **The secret to healthy eyes might be in your stomach**

**Q:** Dear Dr. Wright,

*I have an eye disease, macular degeneration. I can hardly discern colors, can no longer drive, and read with difficulty. No one has been able to help me, so I've spent years reading, researching, experimenting to no avail. Can you advise me on what to do?*

*I know of your wonderful results with many diseases and problems.*

*Thank you for any advice you can give.*

---J.S., Greenville, SC

**A:** Typically when we talk about our eyes and our stomachs in the same sentence, it's because we loaded far too much food on our plates. But after working with many patients who suffer with age-related macular degeneration (ARMD), I've discovered that it isn't only a problem with our eyes, it's actually a digestive problem too.

I first uncovered this link in 1984 when treating a patient. From there, I began noticing that my other patients with macular degeneration almost always had low levels of hydrochloric acid and lacked enough pepsin to digest their food properly. (In fact, a lot of them don't make any hydrochloric acid at all.) Without it, protein isn't broken down into amino acids effectively, and minerals aren't separated from the foods as well as they could be. This is why, as much as we all hate needles, many people respond so much better to treatment with intravenous injection of nutrients rather than just swallowing supplements.

Obviously, convincing your Medicare or HMO physician that your ARMD is being caused by your lack of stomach acid would probably be pretty close to impossible. You really need to see a physician who can treat your eyes as part of your whole body. If you are too far away to travel to the Tahoma Clinic, the American College for Advancement in Medicine can usually offer a recommendation closer to home. (Turn to page 8 to see how to contact them.)

Once your digestion has improved, you will be able to absorb the following nutrients and herbs much more efficiently, and can possibly halt the progress of your macular degeneration.

Healthy eyes have very high concentrations of zinc and the amino acid taurine. If, as I noted above, your body hasn't been digesting and assimilating nutrients properly, chances are your levels of zinc and taurine are low and could be contributing to your vision problems. Supplementing with both of these nutrients may help offset some of this. You'll probably have to take them for a prolonged period of time to bring your levels back up to normal. I have to add that extended use of zinc can cause copper deficiency, so you should also take a small amount of copper to avoid this possibility.

I'm sure you've heard enough about "antioxidants" over the past few years to last you a lifetime, but these little wonders are more than just a term invented by academic physicians so they wouldn't be forced to say the dreaded words "vitamin" and "mineral," or talk about "nutritional therapy." Antioxidants help prevent free radicals from causing damage and disease to various parts of the body, including the eyes. This sort of damage is actually the main cause of macular degeneration. The antioxidants (actually vitamin and mineral) vitamin E and selenium work together in the body and help protect the eyes from oxidative damage.

Legend has it that during World War II, pilots in the Royal Air Force in Great Britain experienced what seemed to be almost supernaturally enhanced vision when they went on night bombing raids over Germany. But the pilots claimed there wasn't anything supernatural about it: the real cause of their improved vision was the bilberry jam they'd eaten. I don't know how much truth there is to this story, but subsequent research on bilberry shows that this herb does benefit eye health. It certainly can't hurt to try, since it hasn't been associated with any side effects.

Remember, your first step is to have your digestion tested and corrected if problems exist. After that, you can begin the following daily supplement regimen: 30 milligrams of zinc picolinate or zinc citrate, twice daily; 4 milligrams of copper, preferably copper sebacate, taken at a different time of day than the zinc; 1,000 milligrams of taurine taken in between meals; 800 units of vitamin E; 300 micrograms of selenium; and 80 milligrams of bilberry, twice daily.

Don't give up if you don't improve immediately. Keep in mind that it takes several months or even longer for the herbs and nutrients to "build up" in your system and begin making a difference. **JWW**

*(continued on page 6)*

## You can toss your Dramamine and still not toss your cookies with this all-natural nausea reliever

At one point or another, we've all felt it. Perhaps you were riding along in a car for hours, seeing trees and fields rush past at a dizzying pace. Perhaps you were on a boat that was rocking back and forth, bobbing up and down with the current. Perhaps you were recovering from surgery or chemotherapy. Or perhaps you were in the early months of a pregnancy. Regardless of the cause, the situations all result in the same familiar feeling: you're hot all over, the air feels stale, your mouth begins to water, and you have a weak, sick feeling in the back of your throat and the pit of your stomach.

Nausea is one of those unpleasant human conditions that the big-time patent medicine companies just don't seem to be able to solve without causing even more problems. The major class of anti-nausea drugs is called dimenhydrinate, which includes brand name products like Dramamine, Hydrate, Marmine, Triptone, and others. Its major side effect, drowsiness, sounds mild, but it can make performing normal daily tasks—especially driving—nearly impossible. Fortunately, there is a natural remedy that has been proven in countless studies to be even more effective than prescription or over-the-counter medications without interfering with your daily routine: ginger. Recently, the results of several new clinical trials have been released, all of which confirm ginger's remarkable value in relieving nausea, whatever the cause.

It may not be making many sensational "new cure" headlines, but ginger is the best proven

treatment for nausea induced by a wide variety of causes, including motion sickness, surgery, chemotherapy, or pregnancy. This humble root has been used as a nausea therapy for centuries in India and China.<sup>1</sup> Dioscorides, the great physician of the Roman Empire,

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wrote that ginger was warming and promoted digestion, and it was highly favored as an antidote against poisons.<sup>2</sup> True, most of us don't need it for that purpose on a regular basis, but by the 13th century it was highly prized as a spice and medicine in Europe. Ginger was popular among the apothecaries of the Middle Ages, being used even then for nausea, hangover and flatulence.<sup>3</sup>

### **Spinning chairs...cruising buses ...bobbing boats**

Researchers conducted the first scientific investigation of ginger's ability to alleviate nausea in the early 1980s.<sup>4</sup> Thirty-six subjects with a high susceptibility for motion sickness were given either ginger or dimenhydrinate and were then blindfolded and placed in a tilted, rotating chair. They found that ginger offered better nausea

prevention than dimenhydrinate.

Dr. Wei Ming Sun and his team of researchers at the University of Michigan conducted another study that again reconfirmed ginger's effectiveness in relieving motion sickness symptoms.<sup>5</sup> Seven healthy volunteers, ages 18 to 35, were given either 1,000 milligrams of ginger powder or a placebo. One hour later, the researchers induced motion sickness in the subjects (by spinning in a large drum 30 minutes after eating a meal). During the drum rotation, the researchers asked the subjects to rate their level of nausea on a scale of 1 to 3 (1 being the least nauseous). The ginger group's average rating was 1.0, which was significantly lower than the 2.5 average placebo group rating. Those who took ginger also experienced a greater delay in developing nausea than did the placebo group, 11.4 minutes in contrast to 4.6 minutes. Nausea ratings after the cessation of the drum rotation (on a scale of 1 to 10) were 7.8 for the placebo group versus 1.5 for the ginger group.

Children are often more prone to motion sickness than adults, especially when traveling in buses and automobiles. With this in mind, one Italian study investigated the value of ginger in such children.<sup>6</sup> Eighteen boys and 10 girls prone to motion sickness were divided into two groups. One group received a standardized preparation of ginger root 30 minutes before the start of the two-day trip and every 4 hours thereafter as necessary. Children younger than 6 were given one capsule (250 mg dried ginger root);



children older than 6 were given 2 capsules (500 mg). The other group received 12.5 to 25 mg of dimenhydrinate 30 minutes before the start of the two-day trip and every 4 hours thereafter as necessary. The severity of motion sickness was determined by a pediatrician who observed the children's symptoms.

The physician rated the ginger as having "good effectiveness" in 100 percent of the children. On the other hand, he rated dimenhydrinate as having "good effectiveness" in just 30.8 percent. Symptoms completely disappeared in the children taking ginger but only improved in the children taking the drug, which also caused substantially more side effects.

Another study tested the effectiveness of seven different treatments for seasickness in 1,489 subjects.<sup>7</sup> Ginger was found to be as effective as the other drugs tested: Nearly 80 percent of travelers reported no seasickness when given 250 milligrams of powdered ginger two hours before departure.

### **Prevent nausea before medical treatments cause it**

Ironically, nausea often occurs as a result of medical procedures designed to treat or cure various conditions, especially surgery and chemotherapy. Ginger offers an effective alternative to anti-nausea drugs, which may interact with other medications being given to the patient.<sup>8</sup>

In one trial, researchers divided 60 women scheduled to undergo major gynecological surgery into three groups. One group was given 1 gram of powdered ginger prior to surgery. The second group was given the anti-nausea drug metoclopramide (Maxolon), and the third group was given a placebo.<sup>9</sup> There were significantly fewer recorded incidences of

nausea in the group receiving ginger compared with placebo, and ginger proved as effective as drug treatment without causing side effects associated with metoclopramide, such as tardive dyskinesia, which is characterized by involuntary movements of the tongue, lips, face, trunk, and extremities.

### **Morning sickness relief that lasts all day long**

Not all pregnant women experience the nausea and vomiting associated with morning sickness, but for the overwhelming majority who do, it can be very distressing. Some physicians believe that morning sickness is a good sign indicating a normal, healthy pregnancy. But no matter what the "experts" say, no one wants to have consistent waves of nausea for three months or more. And pregnant women have an additional little bundle to worry about when considering the potential effects of drugs. Fortunately, ginger can relieve nausea without putting the baby—or the mother—at risk.

Led by Professor John Eden, researchers at the Royal Hospital for Women in Sydney, Australia, conducted a randomized, placebo-controlled, double-blind trial of ginger for treating nausea and vomiting in the first trimester of pregnancy.<sup>10</sup> 120 pregnant women with morning sickness were given either 125 milligrams of ginger extract in capsule form or placebo four times a day, and asked to record their symptoms four times a day. 76 percent of women in the ginger group reported significant relief from nausea within half an hour of taking a capsule, and the relief lasted for all four days of the trial.

Professor Eden commented that "ginger seems to be very well tolerated and there are no apparent

risks to the fetus. We are currently doing a trial to establish the lowest dose of ginger with therapeutic effects."

### **Ginger's benefits: They're not "all in your head"—they're in your stomach**

I think that you will agree with me that these are impressive results for such a simple and well-known herb. How might ginger work to relieve nausea so dramatically and effectively? Most anti-nausea drugs work by blocking signals to the brain that induce nausea. Ginger, on the other hand, has a localized effect on the stomach.<sup>10</sup> This gives us some insight into how best to use ginger to relieve nausea. Since its presence in the stomach is a useful part of its action, small doses repeated often will give the best results. I use this with good results when I treat women with morning sickness.

Some sensible precautions need to be observed when using ginger. While it is believed to be quite safe to use during pregnancy, expecting women should not exceed a daily dose of 2,000 mg of dried ginger (or about 5,000 mg of fresh ginger). Although no problems have been reported, ginger may increase the chance of bleeding and should not be taken with warfarin or aspirin unless you are under professional supervision.

One common side effect of ginger is heartburn. If this occurs, use a lower dose more often or take the ginger with food. You will find ginger and ginger powder supplements easily in most natural food stores.

But make sure that you use good quality ginger, and know that good quality ginger has a spicy taste—certainly not what you'd find in a bottle of Canada Dry. *Natural* is the only way to go.

## Natural ways to cut out canker sores for good: Your mouth will thank you

**Q:** Dear Dr. Wright,

*Thank you for writing such an informative newsletter. I've been wondering if you have any advice that can help me get rid of canker sores. I seem to get them all the time, and it's quite a nuisance! Thanks again.*

---K.S., Roanoke, VA

**A:** You may not be thrilled to hear the advice, since it may require some substantial changes to your normal diet. But I promise that if you give it a try, you will be able to reduce the number of canker sore outbreaks you experience or even eliminate them altogether.

First and foremost, eliminate refined sugar from your diet. Sugar reduces the germ-fighting capability of white blood cells so they can't fight micro-organisms associated with canker sores effectively. I know this is easier said than done—sugar, in many forms (such as high-fructose corn syrup, dextrose, dextrin, maltodextrin, and many others) is hiding in some very unlikely places including fruit juices claiming to be “all natural,” canned soups, and even packaged breads. It's not much fun, and it could make your trips to the grocery store last a little longer in the beginning, but reading the labels of foods on the supermarket shelves is very important. But before you begin thinking I'm the “sugar Scrooge,” there are some all-natural alternatives to sugar that can easily satisfy even the most persistent of sweet toothers. You can use raw, uncooked honey, molasses, 100 percent pure maple syrup, or the herb stevia. All of these items are available in natural food stores.

Second, you should consider the role of food allergies. When you think of food allergies, you might picture the violent and dangerous reactions some people have to things like peanuts or shellfish. But many of my patients are surprised to learn that food allergies can be much more subtle than that, causing all sorts of seemingly unrelated health problems—including canker sores. The good news is that once your food allergies have been identified, you can almost always desensitize yourself to the culprits so that they can be re-introduced into your diet. You will need the help of a good physician trained in these sorts of procedures, though. For a referral to one in your area, contact the American Academy of Environmental Medicine or the American College for Advancement in Medicine (see page 8).

The herpes virus is another condition associated with various preconceived notions, but it's actually much more widespread than you may think. There are a number of different strains of the herpes family of viruses, some of which cause common illnesses like chicken pox, shingles, and—you guessed it—canker sores. This type of canker sore often starts with tiny blister-like outbreaks clumped

tightly together, which rapidly break open forming the typical canker ulceration.

Controlling herpes-related canker sores also involves some dietary changes. The amino acid arginine encourages the growth of the herpes virus, so cut back on foods high in arginine like grains, seeds, beans, nuts, and chocolate. I know that last item on the list can be a real struggle for some people, and I'd never be so bold as to tell a full-fledged chocoholic to stop eating it entirely. But try it out for a while to see if your outbreaks decrease. If they do, save your chocolate indulgences for special occasions. Just remember that the less you eat of these foods, the better you'll feel.

Now that we've gotten the “bad” news out of the way and taken care of the foods you should steer clear of, you'll be glad to know that you don't have to give up everything. In fact, there are some foods you should consider eating more of to reduce outbreaks of herpes-related canker sores. Lysine is an amino acid that discourages the growth of the herpes virus, so you may want to increase your intake of lysine-rich foods like beef, pork, chicken, fish, and most animal proteins. If you're a vegetarian, or just prefer not to eat much meat, taking lysine supplements can also be effective.

In addition, there are several nutrients that can help. Iron, folic acid, vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, and zinc can all aid in preventing canker sores. Iron deficiency can trigger an outbreak, so you should have your doctor check your iron levels. If they are low, I usually recommend daily supplementation with iron.

Folic acid is an important nutrient for maintaining good oral health in general. You can also find folic acid mouthwash products in your local health food store.

Zinc stimulates the immune system by promoting the ability of white blood cells to fight germs, like the herpes virus.

When I'm working with patients with recurrent canker sore outbreaks, I generally prescribe the following dosage guidelines (but you should talk to your personal physician to determine the best amounts for you): 30 to 60 milligrams of iron daily; 3 to 5 milligrams of folic acid daily taken along with 2,000 micrograms of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>; and 30 milligrams of zinc picolinate daily.

For periods of severe herpes-related outbreaks, I usually recommend 2,000 milligrams of lysine, three to four times daily taken in between meals; 500 to 600 micrograms of selenium daily; and 10 to 15 milligrams of lithium daily. (Both selenium and lithium significantly interfere with herpes virus self-reproduction.) Vitamin C should be taken as well, in approximately the same amounts as lysine. For convenience, and since safe, low dose, temporary-use

lithium is very hard to find, I've worked with Bio-Tech Pharmacal (800-345-1199, [www.bio-tech-pharm.com](http://www.bio-tech-pharm.com)) to make a combination formula called "HPX" or "HPX2" that contains all these (and several more) nutrients. Check with your local natural food store or compounding pharmacy, or with the Tahoma Clinic Dispensary.

For long-term prevention of canker sores, I advise taking 2,000 to 3,000 milligrams of lysine daily in between meals, along with smaller amounts of the nutrients mentioned above. When taking lysine, also take an equivalent amount of vitamin C.

Canker sores can be a nuisance, and you may be concerned that the changes you must make to eliminate them are just as big a hassle. But I can assure you that what might be a drastic shift at first will soon become second nature, and you'll have the added benefit of being rid of your canker sores once and for all. And the rest of your body will be much healthier too! **JVW**

## Simple steps to a satisfying sex life

**Q:** *My wife is very patient and understanding, but I'm just not as young as I used to be—I can't seem to maintain an erection for more than 10 minutes at a time. I have a prescription from my doctor for Viagra, but I don't really want to get it filled if I don't have to. Is there something I can try first?*

---I.M., New York, NY

**A:** If Viagra were harmless and inexpensive, I wouldn't emphasize the use of natural therapies so heavily. But Viagra just poses too many risks to be considered the treatment of choice.

For the last 70 or 80 years, the most widely accepted treatment in the United States for sexual problems in both men and women wasn't a "magic" little pill from a patent medicine company. Instead, the mainstream relied on something completely uncharacteristic: an all natural herb called yohimbine. In fact, until Viagra came along, yohimbine was the only medicine approved by the FDA for treating impotence. But since yohimbine is completely natural, it couldn't be patented, which means no one could make enormous profits from selling it. So the big patent medicine companies didn't rest until they came up with a "solution" to sexual dysfunction that would boost their stock prices, even if it turned out to cause significant side effects—and so, Viagra was born. But yohimbine is still effective and is available over the counter in a variety of formulations and by prescription in 5 mg tablets.

Although they're nowhere near as dangerous as those associated with Viagra, there are several side effects to watch out for when using yohimbine, particularly when

recommended quantities are exceeded (can't imagine one of us guys doing something like that, can you, ladies?). The most common ones include anxiety, dizziness, headaches, and insomnia. Men who have high blood pressure are generally advised not to take yohimbine and use of the herb should be discontinued if you experience any increase in your blood pressure.

But let me back up; the first step is to increase your body's levels of nitric oxide (NO). It sounds somewhat ominous (like you're pumping yourself full of rocket fuel), but nitric oxide is actually the natural substance primarily responsible for causing and maintaining erections. It is possible to raise NO levels safely and naturally, enabling normal erections, by raising levels of the amino acid L-arginine, which can be rapidly converted to when needed NO in the body. The best food sources of L-arginine are grains, seeds, beans, nuts, and chocolate. You can also take L-arginine supplements, which are available in most natural food stores. L-arginine is generally considered to be very safe, even at the high doses that may be required for sexual enhancement—3 to 6 grams per day or more. However, if you have cancer or any form of herpes, you should consult your physician before using supplementing with L-arginine.

My research files are filled with studies proving the libido-enhancing benefits of herbs. Some of the results I've found most impressive refer to muira puama, ginseng, and Ginkgo biloba. Muira puama's origin is as exotic as its name implies. It is derived from a shrub that grows in the Amazon region of Brazil. Studies suggest that supplements of this herb can increase libido and improve erectile dysfunction. And you don't have to travel halfway around the world to get it. You can find this product in many natural food stores.

Various studies have demonstrated that ginseng has increased serum testosterone levels and that it may improve blood flow to the penis. Ginkgo biloba is also a major aid in improving blood flow, especially through small arteries like the ones in the penis. Both biloba are available in natural food stores, as well as many grocery stores.

This list might seem a little overwhelming, but I doubt you will need to take all of the items mentioned. Usually one or maybe a combination of two to three will do the job. Whichever combination you decide to try, the dosage amounts I generally recommend to my patients are as follows: 1,000 to 1,500 milligrams of muira puama daily; 100 milligrams of ginseng two to three times daily; and/or 40 milligrams of Ginkgo biloba three times a day.

In addition to these supplements, don't forget diet and

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## Simple steps to a satisfying sex life

(continued from page 7)

exercise: Supplements can help, but they can't fix everything. Making sure your body is healthy overall will lead to a more fulfilling sex life for you and your patient wife. **JWW**

## News flash on hot flashes: Think twice before undergoing synthetic hormone replacement therapy

**Q:** My doctor recommended hormone replacement therapy for my hot flashes. It certainly seems common enough—celebrities are endorsing it on TV commercials. Is it safe?

---G.P., Fort Worth, TX

**A:** The problem with the kinds of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) you've seen advertised by celebrities on TV commercials is that it doesn't exactly replace human hormones. Instead, the most widely prescribed hormones used in conventional HRT have been extracted from horse urine (makes you think twice about putting that pill in your mouth, doesn't it?). Aside from being just plain disturbing in origin, the molecular structures of these hormones differ from those produced in the human body, which could explain why horse-hormone HRT has been linked to various health problems including heart disease. With all of these drawbacks, it doesn't make sense to me to prescribe horse-hormone HRT to women I work with. Especially when it's possible to use identical-to-human (bio-identical) hormones, which don't have any side effects or potential long-term dangers.

The difference between conventional HRT and bio-identical hormone replacement HRT can be confusing, so it might help to know a bit about the basic biology behind them, starting with three major types of estrogen present in a woman's body between the onset of menstruation and menopause: estrone, estradiol, and estriol. With natural hormone replacement therapy, these estrogens are used along with natural progesterone in proportions as close as possible to those produced in the body.

It's been found that estradiol, when prescribed by itself (as sometimes happens in conventional HRT) can raise the risk of cancer after several years. Estriol, on the other hand, is anti-carcinogenic. Healthy women naturally excrete much

more estriol than estradiol and estrone. But when hormone production slows down during menopause, it's important to replace all three estrogens in the same proportions your body would produce on its own if it could.

Another substance used in hormone replacement therapy is progesterone. Pharmaceutical progesterone (medroxyprogesterone) isn't necessarily bad for you in one way—it can lower the risk of developing cancer from taking horse estrogen or estradiol by itself. But it raises the risk of heart problems, so why bother with “fake” progesterone when the natural kind has the same benefits and virtually no risk? The natural form also helps rebuild bone mass, which gives it a major advantage over synthetic.

The next step in natural hormone replacement therapy involves getting in touch with your masculine side. When testosterone levels go down during menopause, it can negatively affect your sex drive. DHEA goes along with testosterone in controlling your libido, as well as keeping your body's tissues healthy. Please have your levels of these hormones tested and if your levels are low, ask your doctor to prescribe identical-to-natural replacements. This is especially important for testosterone replacement, since the major synthetic version (methyltestosterone) is a known carcinogen. Fortunately there is no synthetic form of DHEA (yet), so you can only take the natural form.

I was actually the first physician in the USA to copy this combination of natural hormones and recommended them to women who need them. I've been prescribing bio-identical HRT since 1982 and have witnessed many terrific results. But the best indicator that this therapy really works is the relief on my patients' faces when they tell me they simply feel better using identical-to-human hormones.

For a referral to a physician who can help you with natural, bio-identical hormone replacement therapy, contact the American College for the Advancement in Medicine or the American Academy of Environment Medicine. **JWW**

### Nutrition & Healing website log-on information (MAY)

**Username: expert**

**Password: survival**

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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